21 MAY 1960

General Thomas D. White
Chief of Staff
United States Air Force
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Tommy

I am very much concerned about the lack of progress in the SAMOS development program.

According to information here, the first TIROS prototype was scheduled for early Summer 1959, the launching for late 1959, with actual launch on 1 April 1960. The delays were apparently held within tolerable limits. Although the photographs are not entirely suitable for intelligence purposes, they certainly indicate that a workable system is within the practical state of the art. Yet, we are having difficulty getting the SAMOS program, or the MIDAS program, off dead center. You are aware, I know, of the repeated program redirections and reviews, as well as re-examinations of its technical aspects -- all these actions avowedly taken to insure that no serious mistakes are made.

In view of the current priority intelligence requirements, however, such hesitation should cease. We must pursue the development of SAMOS, and its unique intelligence collection-processing system, with renewed vigor and all possible speed. The propaganda resulting from the U-2 incident has had its effect: The nation, and probably the Soviets as well, are aware that we were better informed than was generally known. However, the intelligence problem is a continuing one and its solution is a mandatory prerequisite to maintaining this nation's deterrent posture during the forthcoming critical years of the cold war. There have been enough satellites launched, and now orbiting the earth, that the Soviets could not seize on these launchings as a pretext that their sovereign airspace has been violated. In my testimony before the Department

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Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee of the 86th Congress (Mahon Committee) on 22 March 1960, I have established that SAMOS is the required vehicle in this next phase, and I have given the reason for it.

We now have a limited SAMOS research and development program. I agreed to it reluctantly, but expressed my concern to both Generals LeMay and Schreiver on 14 December 1959, as a result of the 12 December briefing by AFBMD, by pointing out that the overall research and development program had apparently slipped nine months and the proposed "economy" program did not identify or provide for any operational capability. (Messages VC-5540 and 5541, 16 December 1959)

The philosophy of concurrency should be given added emphasis: This obviously means we should begin to develop operational facilities, as well as research and development facilities, and solve the technical problems as we go along. It should be possible to compress time in such areas as intelligence processing by starting construction, installing prototype equipments for joint ARDC-contractor use, replacing them as improved models appear, thus establishing an R&D/operational continuum useful to both the developer and the user until an agreed operational date.

As you know ARDC is to provide at Offutt a modest intelligence processing capability known as "Early Fix" to which all intelligence data will be transmitted directly from the tracking station (as stipulated in AFCVC letter, 15 May 1959). This effort, in direct support of SAC, is to be an aid in filling the gap until an operational system is available. The contract to build the "Early Fix" facility was awarded on 27 April. However, on 10 May I received an information copy of a USAF (AFDAT) message directing ARDC to withhold this effort pending review by the Under Secretary of the Air Force of the proposed overall plan of intelligence data processing facility from "Early Fix."

Continual delays such as these seriously impair our opportunities to obtain data on Soviet ICBM's during the period it is most direly needed.

The SAMOS program requires a strong, centralized, purposeful management. If there were, for example, one Air Force agency

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giving direction, one prime contractor, and a firm program it should be possible to achieve without undue delay an operational intelligence system whereby our military posture for both the cold as well as general war tasks could be properly configured.

Sincerely

THOMAS S. POWER
General, USAF
Commander in Chief

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